

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
Southern District of West Virginia

In the Matter of the Search of

(Briefly describe the property to be searched
or identify the person by name and address)U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number
"9505513908479246248353"

Case No. 2:19-mj-00094

APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH WARRANT

I, a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government, request a search warrant and state under penalty of perjury that I have reason to believe that on the following person or property (identify the person or describe the property to be searched and give its location):

U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number "9505513908479246248353" in USPS custody in Charleston, WV

located in the Southern District of West Virginia, there is now concealed (identify the person or describe the property to be seized):

Controlled substances and/or proceeds of drug trafficking.

The basis for the search under Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c) is (check one or more):

- ☒ evidence of a crime;
☒ contraband, fruits of crime, or other items illegally possessed;
☐ property designed for use, intended for use, or used in committing a crime;
☐ a person to be arrested or a person who is unlawfully restrained.

The search is related to a violation of:

Code Section	Offense Description
21 U.S.C. Section 841(a)	Distribution of a controlled substance
21 U.S.C. Section 843(b)	Using the mail to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance
21 U.S.C. Section 846	Conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance

The application is based on these facts:

See attached affidavit.

- ☒ Continued on the attached sheet.
☐ Delayed notice of _____ days (give exact ending date if more than 30 days: _____) is requested under 18 U.S.C. § 3103a, the basis of which is set forth on the attached sheet.


 Applicant's signature
 Joshua D. Mehall, United States Postal Inspector
 Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date:

Sept 5, 2019


 Judge's signature
 Dwane L. Tinsley, United States Magistrate Judge
 Printed name and title

City and state: Charleston, West Virginia

A F F I D A V I T

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF KANAWHA, to-wit:

I, Joshua D. Mehall, being duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

1. I am a United States Postal Inspector employed with the United States Postal Inspection Service since February 2007. My responsibilities include the investigation of crimes involving the U.S. Postal Service and crimes furthered through the use of the U.S. Mail. This includes the investigation of controlled substances sent through the U.S. Mail.

2. This affidavit is made in support of an application for a search warrant to search the contents of a U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number "9505513908479246248353" with a return address of "Tony Alston, 4426 11th Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90008" and a delivery address of "Mark Alston, 174 Wertz Ave, Charleston WV, 25311" (hereinafter referred to as the "SUBJECT PARCEL"). The SUBJECT PARCEL is a larger brown box with a handwritten Priority Mail Label. SUBJECT PARCEL was mailed on September 3, 2019 from Los Angeles, California with \$74.35 postage affixed. The SUBJECT PARCEL is presently located at 1002 Lee St., Charleston, WV 25325.

3. The information contained in this affidavit is based on information I have gained from my investigation, my personal

observations, my training and experience, and information related to me by other law enforcement agents and witnesses.

4. Drug trafficking background gained over the years has shown that drug dealers and drug traffickers utilize the U.S. Postal Service for shipping controlled substances, including but not limited to cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and pharmaceuticals. The use of Express Mail, Priority Mail and First Class Mail are favored because of the reliability, anonymity, speed (overnight service), minimal cost, and ability to track the mail piece.

5. Through experience gained in drug investigations by Postal Inspectors and other law enforcement agents, and through information provided by individuals who have been involved in buying, selling, and shipping drugs by Express Mail, Priority Mail and other types of shipments, the Postal Inspection Service has established a drug profile policy to screen mail packages for controlled substances. The profile characteristics include peculiarities in labeling and unusual packaging techniques as well as other considerations. The reason that handwritten labels are of interest is that the vast majority of premium mail services such as Express and Priority Mail involves business-to-business or business-to-person correspondence and features typewritten or computer-generated labels. Person-to-person correspondence (and

the handwritten labels attendant thereto) accounts for a very small minority of total Express and Priority Mail traffic.

6. Postal Inspectors, Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other intelligence sources have identified Arizona, Texas, California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey and New York as major source states for illegal drugs flowing into areas within the Southern District of West Virginia.

7. From my experience, training, and knowledge of drug shipments through the U.S. Mail I am aware that drug traffickers frequently use fictitious names and addresses on the return address portion of the mailing label both to remain anonymous and avoid detection. Some return addresses have been found to be legitimate addresses, but the actual resident at those locations is either fictitious or non-existent. I am also aware that the address of the person that the mail piece is addressed to is generally not fictitious because a valid address is necessary for the package to be delivered. However, at times the true name of the addressee may be altered or ignored in favor of an alias or code name to better disguise their identity from law enforcement.

8. Based upon my knowledge, training, and experience I know that drug traffickers using the U.S. Postal Service often use unusual packaging techniques. These may include excessive taping or wrapping or by including within the package items having strong

odors in an effort to contain or mask the odor of controlled substances in order to avoid detection by trained narcotics dogs.

9. Your affiant knows based on training and experience as well as consultation with other agents, that U.S. Mail is often used by narcotic traffickers to transport controlled substances, as well as U.S. currency derived from the distribution of controlled substances, either as payment or proceeds. Your affiant knows based on training and experience that U.S. Postal Service Express Mail is commonly used to transport controlled substances because narcotic traffickers can track the parcels, and control dispatch times and locations.

BACKGROUND OF INVESTIGATION

10. Since January 2018, your affiant has been working an investigation, with other agencies, involving the distribution of large quantities of methamphetamine coming from Los Angeles, California to multiple addresses in and around the greater Charleston, West Virginia area. Your affiant has seized US Mail packages containing large amounts of methamphetamine as part of this investigation. As part of the investigation, law enforcement has an ongoing Mail Watch seeking large parcels originating from Los Angeles, California and surrounding areas destined to addresses in the greater Charleston, West Virginia area.

11. On September 4, 2019, your affiant was notified that the SUBJECT PARCEL matched the characteristics of the Mail Watch

inbound from Los Angeles, California to "174 Wertz Ave, Charleston, WV 25311". Your affiant and other law enforcement proceeded to the Charleston Mail Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC), and identified and reviewed the SUBJECT PARCEL, and found, among other characteristics, the SUBJECT PARCEL bore a handwritten label, was excessively taped, and was being sent from California, a known source state for illegal drugs coming into the Southern District of West Virginia.

12. On September 5, 2019, Deputy Keadle, Kanawha County Sherriff's Office (KCSO), provided her trained narcotic detection dog, "Paco". Paco has experience with narcotics investigations including drug parcels and was last certified in April 2019. The SUBJECT PARCEL was placed in a line-up with four (4) additional boxes of various shapes and sizes. Paco conducted an exterior examination of all the parcels. Dep. Keadle informed me that Paco positively alerted on the SUBJECT PARCEL indicating the presence of the odor of a controlled substance.

14. Based on the information contained herein, your affiant maintains there is probable cause to believe that the SUBJECT PARCEL - U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail Package "9505513908479246248353" - contains controlled substances, and/or proceeds which are evidence thereof, and/or contraband, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b) and 846.

Further your affiant sayeth naught.



JOSHUA D. MEHALL
POSTAL INSPECTOR

Sworn to before me, and subscribed in my presence, this 5th
Day of September, 2019.

DWANE L. TINSLEY
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE